The Turbulent Transmission of the Torah or the Sustained Succession of Scripture?

Abū Isrā'īl al-Briṭānī

The following is a critique of a chain of transmission (figure 1) which purportedly establishes the Torah's transmission from generation to generation though an unbroken chain. Like my previous paper,[1] the present document will assess whether the chain assumes a façade of succession or successfully demonstrates an uninterrupted tradition.

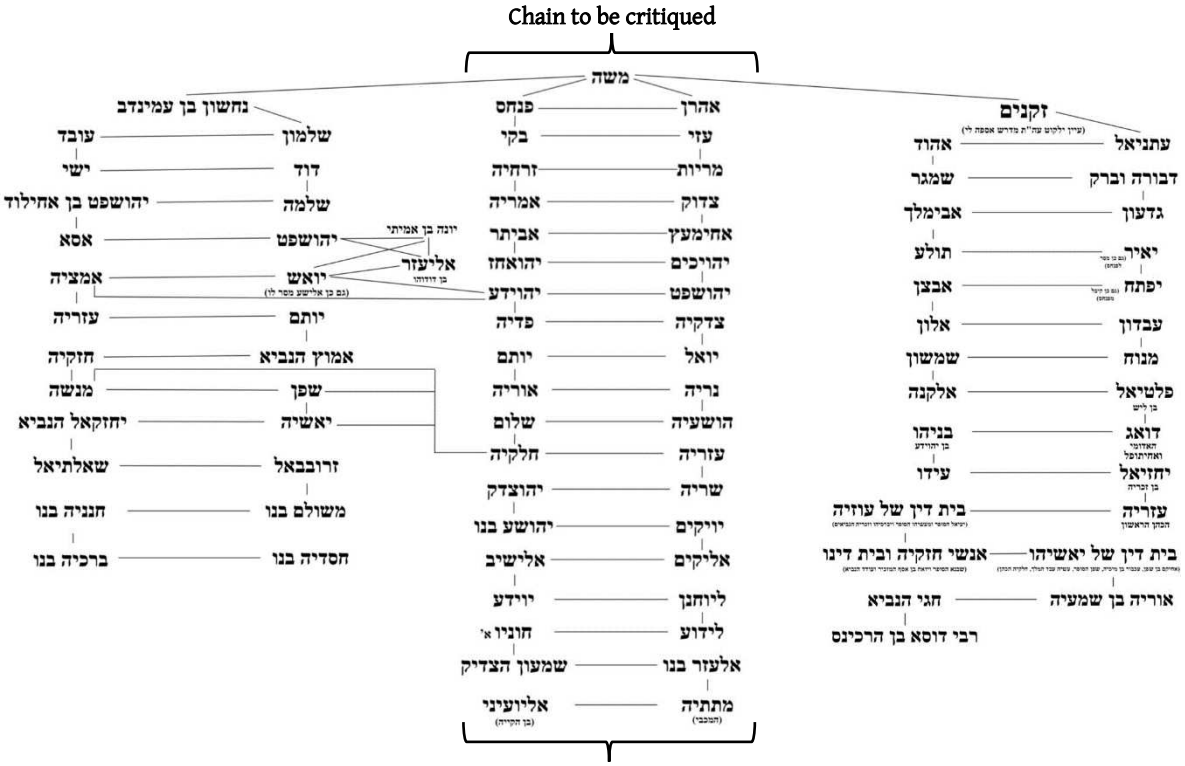

Figure 1

Only the middle chain of transmission (between curly brackets), shown in *figure 1*, is subject to this papers' critique. It is unclear what sources were consulted for the formulation of the above chain of transmission and, if based on the Tanakh and extra-Scriptural sources, why the compiler settled with this sequence of tradents.[2] Nevertheless, we will propose what sources may have aided the construction of the above chain in the subsequent pages.[3] It should be noted that the chain does not stretch to the current era, starting at Moses and ending in the Second Temple period. Therefore, it does not demonstrate that an unbroken chain exists to the present day. The chain traces the transmission through the priests, as all the tradents are descendants of Aaron; hence, it may not illustrate the Torah's transmission at all – although Jews exploit it in this manner – and could be categorised as a record of the chronology of the priesthood or a genealogical tree because many transmitters within the chain share a father-son or grandfather-grandson bond.

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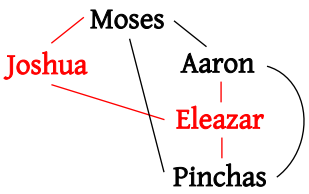
[1] Abū Isrā'īl al-Briṭānī, *The Chains of Torah Transmission: Proof of Preservation or Cunning Concoction?*

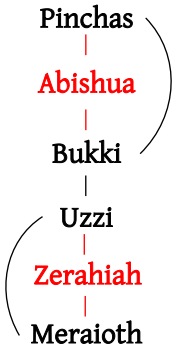
[2] The only source I could procure with a chain of transmission that resembles the middle chain in *figure 1* were those illustrated in הדר הורן, הגדולים רשימות הכהנים הגדולים ע"פ חז"ל

[3] See Appendix.

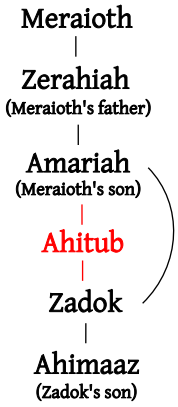
Critique of the Chain of Transmission

The chain of transmission begins with Moses transmitting the Torah directly to Aaron and his grandson, Pinchas.[4] It is peculiar that the chain omits Eleazar, Aaron's son, skipping a generation by missing a transmitter. We also note that this chain neglects the mention of Joshua, who was elected by God to succeed Moses,[5] presumably because *Pirkei Avot*[6] includes him in its rendition of the chain of tradition, which we analysed elsewhere.[7]





Continuing the transmission, Pinchas relays the Torah to his grandson, Bukki, omitting his own son, Abishua, from the chain of transmitters without explanation;[8] the formulator of this chain once again ignoring an entire generation. Bukki transmits to his son, Uzzi, who conveys it to his grandson, Meraioth, as opposed to his son, Zerahiah.[9] In our investigation, thus far, we notice a pattern emerging, the son of a foregone transmitter is sometimes excluded from the chain and replaced by a tradent of the next generation. Yet, according to the Torah[10] and rabbinic literature,[11] it is not the grandfather's responsibility to teach his grandson the Torah; it is obligatory only upon the father. What this chain suggests by leaping over each transmitter's respective son is that some of the transmitters in the chain were taught the Torah by their grandfathers instead of their fathers, which one could argue goes against a Torah commandment. Even if one countered that there was no harm in a grandfather teaching his grandchildren Torah,[12] rabbis contend that a father educating his son takes precedence.[13]



In a bizarre twist of chronology, the student becoming the teacher, and the son fathering his father, Meraioth teaches and transmits the Torah to his father instead of the reverse. It could be argued that it is conceivable for a son to teach his father if the former possesses greater intellect and aptitude than the latter; however, by building upon this premise, it fails to explain a sequential absurdity as to why the chain of transmission mentions Zerahiah as the teacher of Amariah if his son, Meraioth, is more gifted than him. It would make more sense for Meraioth to transmit the Torah directly to his son, Amariah, rather than through the medium of his less proficient father, thus creating a shorter chain. In fact, Zerahiah's presence in this chain seems utterly pointless. Finally, Amariah transmits the Torah directly to his grandson, Zadok, and we have already discussed earlier why this may be problematic from both a scriptural and rabbinic perspective. Following Zadok in the chain of transmission, his son, Ahimaaz, receives the tradition from him.[14]

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[4] Numbers 25:11.
[5] Numbers 27:15-23.
[6] See *Mishnah, Pirkei Avot* 1:1.
[7] See Abū Isrā'īl, *The Chains of Torah Transmission: Proof of Preservation or Cunning Concoction?*
[8] Ezra 7:5; I Chronicles 5:30; I Chronicles 6:35.
[9] Ezra 7:4; I Chronicles 5:32; I Chronicles 6:36.
[10] Deuteronomy 11:19.
[11] See note 12.
[12] *Babylonian Talmud, Kiddushin* 30a.
[13] Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Talmud Torah 1:2*; Yosef Karo, *Shulchan Arukh, Yoreh De'ah 245:2*; Yaakov ben Asher, *Tur, Yoreh Deah 245*; Eliezer Melamed, *Peninei Halakhah, Likkutim I 2:2*; Yoel ben Shmuel Sirkes, *Bayit Chadash, Yoreh Deah 245:1*; Yehoshua Falk, *Prisha, Yoreh Deah 245*.
[14] II Samuel 15:36; II Samuel 18:19, 22, 27; I Chronicles 5:34; I Chronicles 6:38.

Zadok
|
Ahimaaz
(Zadok's son)
|
Abiathar
(Predates Ahimaaz)

The chain purports that Ahimaaz relays the Torah to Abiathar. Tanakhic evidence[15] reveals that Zadok and Abiathar were acquainted, showing that the two belonged to the same generation, while Ahimaaz, on the other hand, belonged to the younger successive generation.[16] Thus, another chronological discrepancy presents itself. One cannot draw from Zadok's relationship with Abiathar that Ahimaaz was associated with him too. Even if the two were acquainted, it would be unrealistic to assume that Ahimaaz transmitted the Torah to a man who belonged to the preceding generation for the same reason we reject the Meraioth-Zerahiah-Amariah link examined on the previous page. Making matters worse, Yosef Levinstein records the deaths of Abiathar and Ahimaaz as the Jewish year 2892 (*Aera Mundi*) AM and 2975 AM,[17] respectively, marking their deaths 83 years apart. Although this does not negate their contemporaneousness,[18] for Ahimaaz to have taught and transmitted the entire Torah and all its supplementary traditions to Abiathar, he is required to have mastered the material in his youth. But this is very unlikely because we do not possess any evidence to base such an assumption on; insisting otherwise without proof is, in colloquial terms, a "coping" mechanism.

Taking all of the above into account, the chain of transmission is already discreditable; however, the chain attracts additional disrepute by including tradents whose biographical information is non-existent. This holds true for most transmitters within this chain, their virtuousness and moral conduct, or lack thereof, is undeterminable; their teachers and students, had they possessed any, remain anonymous or unnameable; sources, assuming they existed, concerning their proficiency in the religious sciences and whether they were scrupulous conveyors of the tradition or dubious witnesses blindly entrusted with transmitting the Torah and its accompanying oral traditions to the next generation are irretrievable; whether any of the people featuring in the chain met, let alone studied one under the other, is unknown.[19] Any posthumous account that provides a flavour of a transmitter's life appears too late to accurately reflect historical reality, some centuries after the tradent's purported existence and others over a millennium thereafter.[20] Hence, it becomes impossible to verify whether any transmitter of the tradition first existed and, secondly, satisfied a long list of criteria to be considered worthy of disseminating the religious tradition to the next generation.[21]

Abiathar
|
Yehoahaz

Thusly, Abiathar conveying the Torah and its complementary teachings to Yehoahaz, as posited by the chain of transmission, could equally have transmitted it to the fairy godmother without affecting the efficacy of the chain. Yehoahaz is shrouded in

[15] The word evidence here is used loosely.
[16] See Abarbanel's commentary on II Samuel 15:27. Abarbanel explains that David addressed both Zadok and Abiathar to take their respective sons, Ahimaaz and Jonathan, to Jerusalem, suggesting that Ahimaaz belonged to the successive generation. I Kings 2:35 also indicates that Ahimaaz postdates Abiathar because the latter was substituted as a high priest by Zadok in place of Ahimaaz. See יצחק, תולדות הכהנים הגדולים, p. 13 & בירך דסקל, משך חכמה עם ביאור בינת החכמה (ה'תשע"ה/2015), p. 284. Had the latter been Abiathar's teacher, it would have been more appropriate to transfer the mantle of priesthood to him. Instead, we observe that Ahimaaz finally assumes the role of high priest after his father, Zadok, during the reign of Rehoboam. See עלי שלמה בניזרי, סדר הדורות הקצר, p. 41; cf. תולדות הכהנים הגדולים, p. 28.
[17] יוסף לוינשטין, דור ודור ודורשיו, p. 5.
[18] See II Samuel 15:27 and II Samuel 15:36 for supposed evidence which shows that they functioned in the same period although they belonged to two respective generations.
[19] See note 27.
[20] Asking Jewish apologists for early biographical compilations of tradents, only to watch the cookie crumble as they scramble to produce books on which a level-headed historian or *muḥaddith* would never rely.
[21] For a synopsis of the vast criteria to be regarded a trustworthy transmitter of the traditions according to the remit of Islam, see Muhammad Zubayr Siddiqi, *Hadith Literature: Its Origin, Development and Special Features*, p. 84-89, 91-109. On a related note, objections by Jewish apologists, such as only dependable people are included in the chain, are baseless assumptions warranting no attention.

anonymity – the Tanakh failing to invoke his name. Josephus is probably the earliest source for his existence, and even then, the exact identity of the person he mentions in his *Antiquities* is unclear – lost in translation.[22] The only other text that references him, calling him a high priest, is *Seder Olam Zuta*,[23] a book dated to the 8th century CE at the earliest,[24] too late to be reliable documentation of history. Jewish publications of recent centuries, relying on *Seder Olam Zuta*, place this figure during the reign of Yehoshaphat (3024-3047 AM).[25] Considering Abiathar died 132 years before Yehoshaphat's reign,[26] Yehoahaz studying under Abiathar and receiving the Torah from him is purely speculative. Nothing compels us to conclude that the two had a teacher-student relationship.[27] Alternatively, we could identify Yehoahaz as one of the two Jewish kings: Yehoahaz the son of Yehu or Yehoahaz the son of Yoshiya. But it is unlikely these two were intended by the compiler of the chain for three reasons: firstly, because of their awful reputations;[28] secondly, because it would be inconsistent with and run contrary to the character of the preceding tradents, all of whom are of priestly descent; and finally, because it would cause major chronological problems. In summary, Yehoahaz is as obscure as a grain of sand.

As if everything hitherto was not enough to discount or outright reject the authenticity of this chain of transmission, we will briefly outline the issues with the remaining 27 transmitters in the following table, demonstrating how the chain masquerades chronological succession.

Table colour-coding key

Green: *did succeed the former tradent, according to the Tanakh.*

Amber: *plausible they received the Torah from the preceding tradent, according to Josephus.*

Red: *no reliable evidence that they received the Torah from the preceding tradent.*

	Name of transmitter	Notes
1	Yehoiakim[29]	Absent from the Tanakh (abbr. AFT). Josephus does not mention him in his list of high priests, and rabbinic chronological sources yield no results for his name.[30] Therefore, uncertainty regarding his existence.

[22] Josephus, *Antiquities* 10:8:6.
[23] *Seder Olam Zuta*, Chapter 5.
[24] Günter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, p. 327.
[25] יקותיאל יהודה גרינוואלד, תולדות הכהנים הגדולים, p. 20; עלי שלמה בניזרי, סדר הדורות הקצר, p. 41.
[26] See note 17.
[27] Often, Jews point at the chain of transmission and testify that since the chain places two tradents in succession, the two were acquainted, the successive receiving from the preceding. This, however, does not constitute evidence. When you demand external corroborative evidence for one tradent studying under the other, they are unable to provide any, some having the audacity, in my experience, to resort to circularity, pointing back at the chain of transmission as if they delivered a convincing reply. Additionally, if a Jew invents an oral tradition, as I have encountered, saying: despite no written record proving this, we know via an unwritten tradition that Yehoahaz met Abiathar and received the Torah from him; respond ironically by saying: I received an oral tradition that Yehoahaz did not meet Abiathar.
[28] For Yehoahaz the son of Yehu, see II Kings 13:2. For Yehoahaz the son of Yoshiaya, see II Kings 23:32 (see, there, the commentaries of Ralbag and David Altschuler); עלי שלמה בניזרי, סדר הדורות הקצר, p. 27-28, 32.
[29] Although יהויכים may be a misspelling, he cannot be identified with the Judean king, Yehoiakim the son of Yoshiya, because his godlessness is well documented (see II Kings 23:37; II Kings 24:19; Jeremiah 26:21-23; Jeremiah 36:26-29; Jeremiah 52:2; II Chronicles 36:5,8; *Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin* 103b).
[30] Page two of Hadar Horn's document, הכהנים הגדולים רשימות הכהנים הגדולים ע"פ חז"ל, includes יהויכים within a chronological chain. He alleges that the list was based on *Seder Olam Zuta* and Meir Simcha's *Meshekh Chokhmah*. Examining both works revealed that יהויכים was present in neither.

	Name of transmitter	Notes
2	Yehoshaphat	AFT. Josephus does not mention him in his list of high priests. *Seder Olam Zuta*[31] mentions him but fails to say whether he succeeded Yehoiakim.
3	Yehoiada[32]	Mentioned in the Tanakh,[33] although there is no indication that he received the Torah from Yehoshaphat or succeeded him.
4	Pediah	AFT. Josephus says he received the priesthood from Axioramus (ambiguous person).[34] No reliable evidence he received the Torah from Yehoiada.
5	Zedekiah	AFT. Plausible he received the Torah from Pediah, his father.[35]
6	Yoel	AFT. Plausible he received the Torah from Zedekiah, his father.[36]
7	Yotham	AFT. Plausible he received the Torah from Yoel, his father.[37]
8	Uriah	Mentioned in the Tanakh.[38] Plausible he received the Torah from Yotham, his father.[39]
9	Neriah[40]	AFT. Plausible he received the Torah from Uriah, his father.[41]
10	Hoshaiah	AFT. Unclear whether he received from the previous trident.[42]
11	Shallum[43]	Mentioned in the Tanakh as the son of Zadok II.[44] No evidence that he was a high priest or remotely acquainted with the previous trident.
12	Hilkiah	Mentioned in the Tanakh[45] and by Josephus[46] as the son of Shallum.
13	Azariah	Mentioned in the Tanakh[47] and by Josephus[48] as the son of Hilkiah.

[31] *Seder Olam Zuta* is henceforth disqualified as evidence because it is too late a source to establish the existence of the priests and cannot be relied upon to be an accurate reconstruction of their history.
[32] Not to be confused with Yehoiada, the father of Benaiah.
[33] II Kings 11:9; II Kings 12:3; II Chronicles 22:11; II Chronicles 23.
[34] Josephus, *Antiquities* 10:8:6. Axioramus cannot be identified with Yehoiada because he did not beget a son called Pediah.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.
[38] II Kings 16:10; Isaiah 8:2.
[39] Josephus, *Antiquities* 10:8:6.
[40] Not to be confused with the chief priest Azariah of the same period (see Malbim's commentary on II Chronicles 31:10).
[41] Josephus, *Antiquities* 10:8:6.
[42] Ibid. Josephus lists a certain Odaias who succeeded his father Neriah as a high priest. However, there is doubt whether Odaias refers to Hoshaiah.
[43] Also called Meshullam; see note 44.
[44] Nehemiah 11:11; I Chronicles 5:38-39; I Chronicles 9:11. Contradicting the Tanakh, Josephus calls him the son of Odaias (*Antiquities* 10:8:6).
[45] I Kings 22:8, 10, 12; Nehemiah 11:11; I Chronicles 5:39; I Chronicles 9:11.
[46] Josephus, *Antiquities* 10:8:6: "Sallumos's son Elkias."
[47] Ezra 7:1; Nehemiah 11:11 (See Malbim's commentary on Nehemiah 11:11 & Ralbag's commentary on I Chronicles 9:11); I Chronicles 5:39-40; I Chronicles 9:11.
[48] Josephus, *Antiquities* 10:8:6: "Elkias's son Azaros."

	Name of transmitter	Notes
14	Seraiah	Mentioned in the Tanakh[49] as the son of Azariah. The last high priest of the First Temple.[50]
15	Yehozadak	Mentioned in the Tanakh[51] as the son of Seraiah.[52]
16	Joshua[53]	Mentioned in the Tanakh as the son of Yehozadak.[54] The first high priest of the Second Temple.[55]
17	Yoiakim	Mentioned in the Tanakh as the son of Joshua.[56]
18	Eliakim	AFT.[57] Son of Joshua and possibly the brother of Yoiakim.[58] Unclear why he didn't receive the Torah directly from his father.
19	Eliashib	Mentioned in the Tanakh[59] as the son of Yoiakim.[60] Unclear why he didn't receive the Torah directly from his father and what his relation to Eliakim was. May be deemed a dubious transmitter based on his actions described in Nehemiah 13.
20	Yoiada	Mentioned in the Tanakh[61] as the son of Eliashib.[62]
21	Yohanan[63]	Mentioned in the Tanakh as the son of Yoiada.[64] May be regarded as an unworthy transmitter for murdering his brother, according to Josephus.[65]
22	Yaddua	Mentioned in the Tanakh as the son of Yonatan (i.e., Yohanan).[66]
23	Onias I	AFT. Plausible he received the Torah from Yaddua, his father.[67]

[49] II Kings 25:18; Jeremiah 52:24; Ezra 7:1; Nehemiah 11:11; Nehemiah 12:1; I Chronicles 5:40. It should be borne in mind that Nehemiah 11:11 says Seraiah was the son of Hilkiah (although, Malbim says in his commentary, there, that Seraiah is another name for Azariah, and Ralbag on I Chronicles 9:11 says the same). However, contrary to their claim, I believe that this is another scriptural mistake because Metzudat David says on I Chronicles 5:39 that Seraiah was killed, and Malbim commenting on Nehemiah 11:11 and II Kings 25:18-21 says the same, making the Seraiah of Nehemiah 11:11 distinct from the Azariah of I Chronicles 9:11. This is similar to I Chronicles 5:38, where Ahitub is called the father of Zadok II but is then contradicted by Nehemiah 11:11, and I Chronicles 9:11, where it says that Zadok II was his grandson rather than son (also pointed out by Malbim on I Chronicles 5:38).

[50] יקותיאל יהודה גרינוואלד, תולדות הכהנים הגדולים, p. 50.

[51] I Chronicles 5:40-41.

[52] Although Josephus in *Antiquities* (10:8:6) contradicts the Tanakh, writing that Yehozadak was the son of Azaros (i.e., Azariah).

[53] Alternatively spelled Jeshua (ישוע).

[54] Haggai 1:1, 14; Haggai 2:2,4; Zechariah 6:11. Verses with the alternate spelling: Ezra 2:2 (see Ibn Ezra's commentary); Ezra 3:2, 8-9; Ezra 4:3; Ezra 5:2: Ezra 10:18; Nehemiah 7:7; Nehemiah 8:7; Nehemiah 9:4-5; Nehemiah 12:1, 10, 26.

[55] יקותיאל יהודה גרינוואלד, תולדות הכהנים הגדולים, p. 50.

[56] Nehemiah 12:10, 26.

[57] Cf. Nehemiah 12:41.

[58] יקותיאל יהודה גרינוואלד, תולדות הכהנים הגדולים, p. 51.

[59] Nehemiah 3:1, 20-21; Nehemiah 12:22; Nehemiah 13:4, 7.

[60] Nehemiah 12:10.

[61] Nehemiah 12:22; Nehemiah 13:28.

[62] Nehemiah 12:10.

[63] Alternatively spelled Yonatan (יונתן), although this variant may be a corruption; see James C. Vanderkam, *From Joshua to Caiaphas: High Priests after the Exile*, p. 55.

[64] Nehemiah 12:11, 22.

[65] יקותיאל יהודה גרינוואלד, תולדות הכהנים הגדולים, p. 52.

[66] Nehemiah 12:11, 22.

[67] Josephus, *Antiquities* 11:8:7.

	Name of transmitter	Notes
24	Shimon the Righteous	AFT. Plausible he received the Torah from Onias I, his father.[68]
25	Eleazar	AFT. Plausible he received the Torah from Shimon the Righteous; however, it is baffling as to why the chain calls him *Eleazar benu* (אלעזר בנו: Eleazar his son), suggesting he was Shimon's son when, according to the sources, he was Shimon's brother.[69] Unclear why he didn't receive the Torah directly from his father, Onias I.[70]
26	Mattathiah (Maccabeus)	AFT. Unclear what his relationship with Eleazar was.[71]
27	Elioenai (the son of ha-Kayya[72])	AFT. May be identifiable with Elihoenai the son of ha-Kof mentioned in Mishnah Parah 3:5.[73] No source indicates that he had any connection with the previous tradent.

Note: In the above table, the colour-coding in the first column serves two purposes: firstly, indicating the strength of the evidence and, secondly, highlighting the likelihood that a tradent received the Torah from the preceding transmitter. We assumed, for the sake of argument, that the Tanakh was the most trustworthy source of information on the history of these tradents, hence its testimony was presumed sufficient to prove that one figure succeeded the other; however, a tradent achieving the colour *green* does not necessarily demonstrate that the Torah was transmitted faithfully from one figure to the next (see, for example, Eliashib and Yohanan, who may be considered questionable transmitters of the tradition based on the documentation that exists) because of the reasons mentioned on page three (second paragraph). *Amber* indicates that a transmitter may or may not have succeeded the preceding tradent, relying on the works of Josephus for this information, whose accuracy in historiography is the subject of scholarly debate. And finally, *red* signifies that no reliable historical data exists to substantiate that an individual received the Torah from his forebearer. Texts such as *Seder Olam Zuta* (see note 31) and other post-Second Temple documents are the lowest in the hierarchy of historicity because they appear too late in history to be accurate representations of the past they claim to recover.

Thus, by the grace of God, the critique of the entire chain of transmission is complete.

Lack of Historical Sources Pertaining to Biography

It is difficult to ascertain whether a tradent existed and, had he existed, what precisely the tradent received, from whom, when, and how because sources that relate to said persons appear too late in

[68] Josephus, *Antiquities* 12:2:5.
[69] Ibid.; יקותיאל יהודה גרינוואלד, תולדות הכהנים הגדולים, p. 60.
[70] Since this chain only illustrates the chronology of the priests and not the transmission of the Torah, as argued below, Eleazar inherited the post of high priest from his brother Shimon the Righteous because the latter's son, Onias II, was too young to succeed his father after his death, following the instruction of Numbers 27:9.
[71] Whilst Natan Elnatan strives to mention that Mattathiah's father, Yohanan, received the Torah from Antigonus of Socho, he makes no effort to note that Mattathiah received the Torah from Eleazar. See נתן אלנתן, ספר נתינת הדורות על סדר הדורות, p. 55-56. This is another example of the compiler of the chain forcing the suggestion of a successive link without evidence.
[72] This is probably a corruption or a spelling variant. I could only trace this variant to Alexander Marx's *Seder Tannaim ve-Amoraim* (p. 13) where הקייה was rendered in the footnotes as הקוף. Also, see note below.
[73] A variant in the Kauffman Manuscript reads: אליועיניי בן הקייף (Elioenai the son of ha-Kayyaf); cf. אהרן בן מרדכי הימן, תולדות תנאים ואמוראים (חלק ראשון), p. 150, 379.

history to be accurate historical witnesses. In fact, even late rabbinic sources fail to offer the exact details of the Torah's transmission and the lives of the figures who handled it. Questions pertaining to what portions of the Torah were transmitted and which oral traditions were taught, from generation to generation and from tradent to tradent, who taught the Torah and whether they were qualified to do so, which periods it was promulgated in and for how long, what methods were used for teaching and if they were effective, whether the students had the ability to retain the knowledge and whether they achieved the mastery to impart it to their students and other queries are left unanswered because of a lack of biographies relating to individual transmitters, both biblical and Talmudic. Therefore, repeating our earlier sentiment, the intellectual and moral competence of a tradent cannot be determined. Rabbinic biographers of recent history have neither arrived at a consensus nor have a shortage of dispute regarding the dating and chronology of influential figures of their history owing to the non-existence of early biographic material. Further exasperating the incoherence is the recurrence of names, making it challenging to recognise the person and the period they ministered in, often conflating two individuals (e.g., the debate in both rabbinic and academic circles about identifying Shimon the Righteous with Shimon I or Shimon II).

It was surprising to discover Rabbi Yekuthiel Yehuda Greenwald, the author of *Toldot ha-Kohanim ha-Gedolim*, conceding to a lack of accurate historical sources which unshroud the history of the priests. His words are exceedingly relevant to the ambiguity that surrounds the tradents of our chain of transmission:

> וחסרון עוד יותר גדול הרגשתי בשעת כתבי את ספרי זה, הוא מה שחסרים לנו הרבה ספרים מהימים ההם...אין לנו ידיעה ברורה מימי המשכן בשילה ומחיי הכהנים הגדולים בימי בית ראשון.[74]

> An even greater shortcoming I felt while I was writing this book of mine is that we lack many books from the past...[and] we do not have clear knowledge of the days of the tabernacle in Shiloh and [we lack knowledge of] the lives of the high priests during the days of the First Temple.

He also states:

> והודות לה' שספריו נשארו לנו, כי אלמלא יוסף היינו מגששים באפלה, כי כל הספרים שנתחברו לפניו ובזמנו כולם אבדו ואינם.[75]

> Thank God that his books remain with us, for without Josephus, we would be fumbling in the dark because all the books that were compiled before him and in his time have all been lost and are [now] no more.

In a forthcoming paper, rabbinic and academic quotes are cited on the scarcity and unreliability of biographical and historical information of individual tradents, namely of biblical and Talmudic figures. Overall, the biographical sources for these transmitters are described as too little too late, so varied and vibrant that it is impossible to reconcile the contradictions, iron out the creases, or reassemble them into a harmonised historical documentary.

A Theory Regarding the Chain

Despite Jews having used the chain in question with the incentive of fulfilling their apologetic enterprise of proving an unbroken chain of transmission for the Torah, the chain only seems to illustrate the chronology of the priesthood, as stated in the introduction. This is demonstrated by the fact that most figures in the chain have a father-son or grandfather-grandson relationship, showing the patrilineal succession of the priesthood. Some figures who appear in the chronological chain who are not immediate relatives of a preceding figure, such as Abiathar and Mattathiah, do not disprove this theory because they, too, were priests and descendants of Aaron. Further supporting this theory

[74] יקותיאל יהודה גרינוואלד, תולדות הכהנים הגדולים, p. 4.
[75] Ibid. p. 5.

is the presence of redundant figures within the chain, such as Zerahiah and Shimon the Righteous.[76] Had the chain been drafted to show the transmission of the Torah, these individuals would not be included because they lengthen the chain unnecessarily. The only viable justification for the aforementioned figures to appear in the chain would be to show the chronology of the priesthood, not the transmission of the Torah. Not renouncing the chain as a reflection of the Torah's promulgation through history would only prove counterintuitive because of the chronological discrepancies highlighted in the above pages. Whereas embracing that the chain reflects the succession of the priesthood, the discrepancies could be glossed over through creative imagination.

Closing Remarks

Unfortunately, fanciful depictions of chains of transmission snare the gullible, but by applying Islamic methods of chain analysis, the investigator can remove the outward semblance and uncover the reality. It is incontrovertibly the case that Jews do not possess a like framework for scrutinising chains of transmission, for if they did, we would have witnessed Jewish scholars applying their methodology of scrutiny by grading chains of transmission within their tradition. The vast majority of chains in their literature are post-Islamic contrivances, such as *figure 1* under discussion. This writer has no doubt that upon seeing the above mentioned errors in their supposed chain of transmission, they will be motivated to produce another updated chain of transmission in the present day, forging a link between them and Moses. We await its release with much anticipation.

Regardless of what their minds fabricate, or their pens falsify, the Day of Judgment will arrive before they produce a single chain of transmission as lucid, successive and untouched by chronological errors as those preserved in the Islamic tradition.

[76] Both are superfluous figures. Zerahiah, for reasons mentioned on page two and Shimon the Righteous because his brother, Eleazar, could have received the Torah directly from his father Onias I, making it unnecessary for Shimon the Righteous to have been lodged in between.

Appendix

Sequence of tradents reflects the chronology of the Tanakh (namely the books of Numbers, Ezra, Chronicles and others). See page 2 & 6.

Anomalous individual, not found in any rabbinic source. See page 4.

Follows the sequence of *Seder Olam Zuta*, an 8th Century text (see note 24). See pages 4-6.

Follows the chronology of Josephus' *Antiquities*. See pages 5-7.